

UK'S LEADING DISABILITY RIGHTS ORGANISATION SAYS THE 'CAMERON COMMISSION' MUST SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

RADAR, the UK's leading pan-disability campaigning organisation, has told the Conservative Commission on 'Special' Educational Needs (SEN), established by David Cameron MP and chaired by Sir Robert Balchin, that it is strongly committed to a policy of inclusion in mainstream schools, and that there is a need to ensure that the policy is properly supported.

RADAR welcomed the opportunity to make a submission to the Commission, and encouraged the Commission to continue to consult with the disability sector, particularly students with 'Special' Educational Needs themselves.

Representing the views of its members, RADAR highlighted the need for additional support to be provided to teachers. Research carried out by the Teacher Training Agency found that a shocking 55% of Newly Qualified Teachers felt that their training was 'poor to adequate' in equipping them to teach children with 'Special' Educational Needs.

RADAR argued for a greater emphasis on SEN-skills during training, and a commitment from Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to provide SEN-specific training to teachers as part of their ongoing professional development.

Models of good practice and successful pilot programmes already identified by Ofsted and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) should be adopted by LEAs to ensure the overall spread of skills and expertise in teaching students with specific needs.

Kate Nash, Chief Executive of RADAR, today told the Commission,

"We believe that the answer lies in ensuring adequate resources are provided to underpin the policy. We must not move away from a policy which has seen positive outcomes for numerous children both with and without disabilities."

"The skills in teaching children with learning difficulties can be good teaching practice for all the class – every student learns in different ways. We must accommodate difference in our classrooms and celebrate difference in our daily lives."

RADAR also highlighted the need for a wider understanding of 'inclusion where possible', arguing that the policy should allow for more flexibility for those students able to participate in at least some aspects of mainstream education.

RADAR was concerned at the recently released Ofsted figures showing that very few segregated educational establishments were co-located with mainstream schools, and thus could not take this flexible approach.

"The policy of inclusion should be implemented with enough flexibility to allow all students to participate in as many aspects of mainstream education as possible, retaining access to specific expert support when required," Kate Nash said.

Notes for editors:

¹ RADAR is a national non-governmental disability organisation working for the rights of disabled people, from the broadest range of cultural, racial and social backgrounds, irrespective of their impairment. Although RADAR works with organisations of all types (of and for disabled people) RADAR itself is an organisation of disabled people.

² RADAR's vision is about pushing out the boundaries of the expected; a vision of a world where human difference is routinely anticipated, expertly accommodated and positively celebrated.

³David Cameron MP, Shadow Secretary of State, has established a Commission, to be chaired by Sir Robert Balchin, to consider the current policy of inclusion and system of statementing for children with 'Special' Educational Needs (SEN). In addition to RADAR, the Commission will hear from Baroness Warnock, the architect of inclusive education in the UK who recently questioned the success of the policy.

⁴For a copy of RADAR's full submission to the Cameron Commission please contact Erin O'Brien on 020 7566 0119 or at erin.obrien@radar.org.uk

⁵ The Teacher Training Agency's survey of Newly Qualified Teachers can be found at <http://www.tta.gov.uk/php/read.php?articleid=863§ionid=174>

⁶ The Ofsted reports on SEN can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index

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